

98-04-17a

As we prepare to study the Word of God this evening, let's take a moment to ask God's blessing. Father, we thank you for this day. We thank you for all of the ways in which you have expressed your grace and your love toward us in sustaining us, providing for us, protecting us, blessing us, answering our unspoken requests and meeting even our unrecognized needs.

We thank you for the tremendous privilege that we have of living this life at this period of history, being sustained through the ministry of God the Holy Spirit and the divine power that you have incorporated into your Word. We pray tonight as we study your Word that God the Holy Spirit will take these things and not only cause them to be interesting and stimulating to us, but also something that will transform our souls and enable us to live a life that pleases you and glorifies our Savior, Jesus Christ. And we pray these things in his name.

Amen. We're going to take the opportunity since we are between topics in our Friday night studies to more fully examine something that we encountered last week in the study of Genesis chapter 6. And by way of reminder, you might turn to Genesis chapter 6. This passage has been quite fertile ground for speculation and for theorizing and hypothesizing and coming up with widely different interpretations. And without slowing our progress too greatly in Genesis, I think it would be helpful and interesting to take a little bit closer look, while we have the opportunity, at a couple of things that this chapter suggests.

You'll remember that in the midst of giving the genealogy or the descendants of Seth, the account is sort of interrupted and we have the story of Noah almost inserted into the midst of that. We saw Sunday that you could take chapter 6, chapter 7 and chapter 8 out of the account and resume after chapter 5, verse 32 with chapter 10. And so chapter 6, 7, 8 and 9 almost form their own little mini-series or a little small novel here.

And you pick up with genealogical information and the origin of nations in Genesis chapter 10. But this is a very important digression or an important insertion here in the account because it explains why the world is the way we now see it. It answers this section of chapters in Genesis tells us why science and archaeology differs with the seeming biblical understanding of things.

Science and archaeology wants us to believe that the earth is far older and that life has been here far longer and that a great evolutionary process has taken place. It points to things like stalagmites and stalactites and the Grand Canyon and sedimentary layers and so forth and the earth's crust to carbon dating and fossil petrified trees and so forth. All of these different pieces of evidence and they say how can you possibly stick your head in the sand and accept the biblical account that there has been only roughly 6,000

years of human history.

Well, we don't know the age of the planet because God does not get that specific in Genesis chapter 1 but we do know how long man has been here and we know how many of the things that science observes came into being and it is recorded in these chapters. Genesis 6-9. So it's a fascinating section and it begins in chapter 6 by telling us that it came to pass when men began to multiply on the face of the earth and daughters were born to them that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were beautiful and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose.

The Lord said, My spirit shall not strive with man forever for he is indeed flesh yet his days shall be 120 years. There were giants on the earth in those days and also afterward when the sons of God came into the daughters of men and they bore children to them those were the mighty men who were of old men of renown. Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

The Lord was sorry that he had made man on the earth and he was grieved in his heart so the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth both man and beast creeping thing and birds of the air for I am sorry that I have made them. And as you'll remember it's quite unusual from a storytelling point of view the sequence of these comments. You have man multiplying on the face of the earth the sons of God which we have already established are angelic in nature come into the daughters of men and they have these hybrid sort of children and then God says, I'm really upset with man.

He doesn't say, I'm upset with these sons of God and I'm going to wipe them out in a flood. He is unhappy with man and with the evil intents of his heart. So it causes us to wonder and in fact this has been the basis for people believing that everything in this chapter must be referring to man.

Why would God be upset with man and wipe man from the face of the earth unless these first several verses are not referring strictly to men. So the most common understanding and you will probably find it in the margin notes of your Bible or in a commentary you might have is that the sons of God are the godly line of Seth that has been sketched out in chapter 5 and the daughters of men are from the ungodly line of Cain that we saw in chapter 4. It is however exceedingly difficult to sustain that from any of the language. There is no place else in the Bible where one portion of mankind is called the sons of God and the others are not.

You can't really make it work. So when we look at the term, the sons of God, we see the *banay ha elohim* in Hebrew. We are in fact looking at angels.

Why is it that the flood is aimed at man? What happened to these angels that

intermarried with mankind? We saw on Sunday that by looking in the New Testament at passages such as Jude 6 and 2 Peter 2.4 that the Bible has actually quite a bit of information about what happened to these angels. The reason they are not mentioned in the discipline on the earth is that they have left the earth and have a separate fate. They are separate from Satan and his angels.

God didn't say, well, go join Lucifer. Their fall is separate. Their mistake, their sin before God is separate.

And their sentence and their judgment is separate from Satan and the fallen angels. So it is very interesting because you have two different categories of what you might call fallen angels. One category of which is represented by Satan and the demons that are free to interact with mankind on the earth.

And then you have this second category, the origin of which we find in Genesis 6. And these, when you look at 2 Peter 2 and Jude 6, we find that they have been imprisoned in darkness. They are in chains. They are in darkness.

They are in the pit reserved unto a day of judgment. And we don't have a whole lot of information about how or when they are judged. But we did see in Revelation that there are angels that are released from the pit that go forth to wreak havoc on the earth during the tribulation period.

And we'll return to that perhaps a little bit later this evening. But what we want to look at right now is a very difficult riddle that is posed by verse 3 of chapter 6. The Lord said, My spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh, yet his days shall be 120 years. This verse has been an enigma almost from the time that Moses gave the books of the law to Israel.

And the crux of this verse hinges on what God means when he says, Ruach, my spirit. As I mentioned on Sunday, this word, Ruach, is primarily translated three different ways in the Old Testament. It's translated wind.

It's translated spirit. And it is translated in reference to the Holy Spirit versus the spirit of man or some other spirit like a demonic type spirit. In the Levitical code, I'm trying to think of the term that the King James uses when it says don't go to the diviners, don't go to the people who... Familiar spirit.

Familiar spirit is Ruach in combination with another word in Hebrew. And so this was a reference to demons. So we have the term Ruach or familiar spirit used of demon influence, demon activity in connection with necromancy and the witch of Endor type of thing.

So there is a connection between the word spirit and the concept of angels or angelic creation. And this is very important because this is the beginning of solving this puzzle.

We immediately... Most of your Bibles, if you look at Genesis 6-3, have spirit with a capital S. My spirit.

And we assume that it's the Holy Spirit. The only reference in Genesis thus far to the Holy Spirit has been Genesis 1-2. The spirit of God hovered over the face of the waters.

And that also has been the subject of discussion or various interpretations because Elohim, which is the word for God, is also a term for something that's very big. If you say something in Hebrew or in Arabic, something is of God, that means it's huge. Sometimes they'll say, oh, there was a Ruach Elohim that came and stirred up the waters.

They're not saying that the spirit of God came and stirred up the waters. They're saying there was this enormous wind. And you have this difficulty of interpretation when you go to the book of Jonah.

And after Jonah boards the ship to Tarshish, it says that God hurled a wind or hurled a Ruach into the water. Well, what is the book of Jonah telling us? You might turn there to Jonah to give you some idea of the challenge that we face in trying to accurately interpret or rightly divide and accurately translate the Word of Truth. Jonah 1, verse 4. Typically, when you hear the story of Jonah told, you have this long prelude before the storm on the sea, but you get to it in about three verses in the book of Jonah.

God tells him in verse 2, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city. Cry out against it. Their wickedness has come up before me.

But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.

But the Lord sent out a great wind on the sea. Well, this is one of those places where Ruach is translated wind. But if you think about it, Ruach is commonly used for angels and for spirits.

We have the verse, He makes his angels spirits and his ministers a flame of fire. So, did God send an angel as we see pictured in Revelation? The angels that hold the winds and that have control over the seas. Did he send an angel into the water to stir it up and create this storm? Or did he in fact send a physical wind that was simply an elemental force and not a conscious creature? It's hard to know.

And this is one of the passages that almost seems to blur that line. So, this is one of the passages that reminds us that all of these translations are, whether it's wind or spirit or Holy Spirit, are possibilities any time you find the word Ruach. And you have to look at the context and attempt to determine what it means.

What does that tell us about Genesis chapter 6? We need to look at the context to

determine what is meant by Ruach. There has really been no mention of the Holy Spirit in any of this. God didn't say at the fall in the garden when you go out, my spirit is going to watch over you or my spirit is going to be your conscience or my spirit is going to convict you of sin, righteousness, and judgment.

There's just been no mention of any contact or ministry between God the Holy Spirit and mankind. And so it's a very strange comment to make that the sons of God intermarry with the daughters of men. God sees that and He says, my spirit will not strive with... You see the kind of non-sequitur that is.

What does an intermarriage between angels and humans have to do with the ministry of God the Holy Spirit? Well, it really doesn't have anything to do with it. And that tells you that we have the need to go back and review our translation and our understanding of verse 3. So, what is the immediate context in Genesis chapter 6? Well, you have the sons of God who are not keeping their first estate. When you look at Jude 6, Jude mentions this episode.

This is a short but very significant book. The angels who did not keep their first estate or their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day. We have a similar reference in 2 Peter 2 and verse 4 where these angels are mentioned in a chronological fashion.

If God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to Tartarus and delivered them into chains of darkness to be reserved for judgment, and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly. And you have this mentioned basically in the same connection. It becomes clear to us that this is a different category than the demons who are free to roam about.

So, what is verse 3 referring to when it says, My ruach will not strive with man. The word translated strive there is from the Hebrew verb *din*, d-y-n, from which the noun *Dan* comes from that means judge. It's one of the words in Hebrew for judge.

Shafat is another term in Hebrew for judge. S-h-a-p-h-a-t. But Dan, if you look at the name of the tribe, when Jacob named him, or when his mother named him actually, it means that he will judge.

And in Jacob's blessing toward the end of his life, he mentions his judging function. So, if that's what the verb means, and by the way, this is the only place in the Old Testament where *din* is translated strive, or abide, or whatever your English translation may say there. People have struggled with this because it doesn't make any sense.

If it's the Holy Spirit, my Holy Spirit will not judge man always. That isn't a helpful translation either. But it does make sense when we realize that God has detailed these

angels to oversee mankind in the early days of civilization when man didn't know to invent the wheel or work copper or understand the cycles of agriculture and fertilization.

And you start thinking about all of the things necessary to get a human civilization off the ground that has not evolved over millions of years. God sent a detachment of angels to come down and perform that function to oversee, to judge, to administer the human race. And this was their specific role.

By looking at the daughters of men and seeing that they were tov, that they were good or beautiful, they took wives for themselves, the normal Hebrew word for Mary, which implies the father's consent, a wedding, the whole engagement period, and dowry and everything else. They took wives for themselves of all whom they chose. This also has the idea or the possibility is suggested at the end of that verse that there may have been polygamy involved, that one of these sons of God may have had more than one human wife.

The idea that they took wives of all whom they chose indicates that this may have been included more than just one wife. So in verse 3, the Lord says, My Ruach will not judge man forever, for he is indeed flesh, or he is somehow associated with the flesh. And the Hebrew here is very obscure, but you have the idea that there is an incarnate form in which these angels are dwelling.

And this is a consistent pattern of angelic interaction in the Old Testament. We saw on Sunday that in Genesis 17, God comes with two incarnate angels who stop and eat a meal. Abram slaughters a calf, and Sarah makes cakes, and God and the angels eat that meat and eat that bread.

And then the two angels move on to Sodom, where Lot lives, and go to his house, and they are so physically desirable that the depraved inhabitants of Sodom want to have relations with these two individuals. And Lot says, No, they're my guests. Please don't harm them.

Take my daughter instead, which will be fascinating to study when we get to that part of Genesis. But these were obviously physical, human-looking companions of God when he came to visit Abram, and God sent them to make sure Lot and his family exited the city before the destruction. You can find that in Genesis 17 and in the later verses of that chapter.

You have a similar episode taking place when Jacob wrestles with a man until morning. This is obviously the angel of the Lord in human form. To be able to wrestle with him, he is corporeal, if you will.

And the confirmation of Jacob's new name takes place on that occasion, and it is spoken. And this individual seems to speak for God, and Jacob thinks he has wrestled with God.

Your Bible may actually even have a caption here that says, Jacob wrestles with an angel.

There have been great paintings of Jacob wrestling with the angel. The Bible never says the word angel there. It says he wrestled with a man until morning.

And you'll find this over in Genesis 32 when he separates his family and sends part of them across the river and so forth. In Genesis 32.24, it says, Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until the breaking of day. When he saw that he did not prevail against him, he touched the socket of his hip, and the socket of Jacob's hip was out of joint as he wrestled with him.

And he said, Let me go, for the day breaks. But he said, I will not let you go unless you bless me. He said to him, What is your name? He said, Jacob.

And he said, Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have struggled with God and with men and have prevailed. Then Jacob asked, saying, Tell me your name, I pray. And he said, Why is it that you ask about my name? And he blessed him there.

So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved. And you can tell by looking at the word Peniel there, that pen is the word for face, and el is the short form of Elohim or God, and it means the face of God, literally. I've seen the face of God.

And yet, this is said to be a man. Back in verse 24. So you have the idea that heavenly creation, and some people believe that this is a pre-incarnate form of the Lord Jesus, although there is nothing in the passage that directly suggests that.

We infer that from the fact that the Son of God is the revealed member of the Trinity. He is the one who becomes flesh and dwells among us and so forth. But it's difficult to prove that.

It seems reasonable to assume. Jacob believed that he had spoken with God. But you can go to other places in the scripture where angels speak, and it's the angel of the Lord.

There's a classic case in Revelation where the angel speaks the words of God to John, and John bows down to worship him. He says, No, get up, I'm a servant of God like you. And so there are cases where someone represents another and speaks in the first person for the person they represent.

If you look at the gospel accounts of the Roman centurion, one gospel says that the centurion came out and spoke with Jesus. The other gospel says that the centurion sent servants to speak to Jesus. And in the account where it appears that the centurion came out, those servants are speaking for the centurion.

And he says, I am not worthy that you should come under my roof. Simply speak the word. I have those who serve under me.

I say go, and they go. I say come, and they come. You have that verbal authority, and I don't want you to defile yourself, so to speak, by coming under my roof.

Well, if you look at the parallel account, those were actually servants speaking on behalf of the centurion. But the other gospel presents it as though the centurion is speaking. This is what angels do for God.

They will appear and speak, and it is as though God is speaking. They represent God. They carry out His will.

They apparently function under the ministry of God the Holy Spirit. Now, this is a new idea, and it sounds kind of foreign, but if you stop and think about it, in the human realm, when God accomplishes something, what power accomplishes it? When Jesus did miracles, what power made the blind see? What power made the lame walk? What power controlled the weather and turned loaves and fishes into a sufficient quantity for thousands to eat? It's the power of God the Holy Spirit. Everything that Jesus did, He did in the power of the Spirit.

The scriptures tell us under the doctrine of kenosis, Paul says Christ emptied Himself and took on the form of a servant. The miracles that Christ performed are not a valid proof of His divinity because there are prophets who did these things. Jesus told the disciples, When I leave, you will do these things and greater.

So, although Christ is divine, His miracles are not a valid proof of His divinity because others have raised the dead. Others have multiplied food. You find these in the Old Testament with Elijah and Elisha.

So, it is the Spirit of God acting through human beings that accomplishes the purposes of God in human history. It is not a far-fetched idea that the Spirit of God also works through God's angels to accomplish God's purpose. You have to ask yourself the question, What is the power accomplishing God's purpose? Is it God's power or is it creature power? If angels are going out without God the Holy Spirit and effecting God's purposes in history, then angel power is something separate and distinct from God's that can produce good.

We know in the human realm that human energy doesn't accomplish God's purpose. It is divine power. It is power from God.

It is God's Holy Spirit and God's Word that accomplish God's purposes. It seems reasonable to infer that that model holds in the realm of heavenly creation and that when angels go forth and do God's bidding, they are in some way representing or exercising the power of God's Spirit because everything good that happens happens

through God. It is God's Spirit.

It is God's Word. It is God's Son. You cannot see a divine good taking place that is produced from some source other than God.

Now this association between angels and the term Ruach is something we began to explore last Sunday and I would like to direct your attention again to a couple of these passages to sort of break in what for me is a new idea. I never really thought about the Holy Spirit having a relationship with angelic creation, but this actually helps us understand passages not only passages like Genesis chapter 6, but several passages in the Prophets and in Revelation. So when you find passages that talk about the sevenfold Spirit of God, we don't have any information that God the Holy Spirit Himself is somehow a... we have God in Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Well, do we further have sort of a septuicity or something in the Spirit where He has seven different personalities or seven different functions? People have really wrestled with the idea of the sevenfold Spirit of God. This ministry, sevenfold ministry, is related to Christ over in Isaiah where He says, I will put my Spirit on Him, the Spirit of... and then it gives seven, the Spirit of wisdom, the Spirit of power, the Spirit of so forth. I believe, I'm not sure I have that one written down.

I think it's in Isaiah chapter 61. Is this in fact the... No, 61 is the passage where the Spirit of the Lord God is upon me because the Lord has anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor. He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, opening of the prison to those who are bound, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

This is a passage that Jesus Himself quotes in connection with Himself on a feast day in the New Testament. But the point is, the Spirit of God works directly through human beings and indwells and fills us in this age. We know in the Old Testament that He endured and came upon men to do the tabernacle work and so forth.

So it is at least possible, and we'll just label it a possibility for now, that God the Holy Spirit also enables and empowers angelic creatures to perform their function. And this is going to help us understand some passages. Turn with me again to Revelation 1.4 where John says, Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come and from the seven spirits who are before His throne.

Now, in my new King James, that spirits has a capital S. Well, are there seven Holy Spirits? Are we to understand this as that there is more than one Holy Spirit? That this is somehow a part of the Triune God that is being referred to here? Or are these the angels that are the honor guard, the cherubim that are associated with the throne of God that we find elsewhere in Scripture? Well, once again, when you have Ruach, or in the New Testament, when you have pneuma, P-N-E-U-M-A, what that word refers to is determined

by context because it can be spirit with a big S. It can be spirit with a little S. And in secular Greek, pneuma is also used in translated wind, just as Ruach is in the Old Testament. But here is where categorical study aids us. Grammatically, this could be the Holy Spirit.

But theologically, we don't have any indication that the Holy Spirit is seven spirits rolled into one. If it said sevenfold spirit, we could make a case. But when it uses spirit in the plural here, seven spirits, we don't have God the Holy Spirit, who is a person, referred to in the plural any more than we have the Lord Jesus Christ referred to in the plural.

If this said, and the seven Christs which are before the throne, we would know that there is something wrong. Well, it is equally strange to say that this is God the Holy Spirit. The seven Holy Spirits who are before the throne doesn't work.

So this should not be a capital S, it should be a small s. These are ruachot, or the plural of Ruach, or the plural of pneuma. These are angels. And they are angels who are before the throne of God.

We find references again in chapter 3 and verse 1 of Revelation. These things says, He who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. This of course refers back to chapter 1 when John looks and sees the one standing.

In chapter 1 verse 16, He had in his right hand seven stars out of his mouth when a sharp two-edged sword in his countenance was like the sun shining in its strength. And in verse 12 it tells us that he is standing in the midst of seven golden lampstands. So the one standing refers to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Seven stars that are in His hand once again is something that we have to determine from context. These seven spirits of God and the seven stars. Whatever they are, they are not God the Father, God the Son, or God the Holy Spirit.

So we look further in chapter 4 and verse 5 where God is seated on His throne. You have the Holy Spirit mentioned in verse 2. Immediately I was in the Spirit. This is John carried away by the Spirit to see this vision.

Behold, a throne sat in heaven, and one sat on the throne, and he who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance. And there was a rainbow around the throne in appearance like an emerald. Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting clothed in white robes, and they had crowns of gold on their heads.

And from the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God, or the seven spirits belonging to God. Now, the torches of fire here or the lamps of fire are again a reference to these angelic beings, the keruvim or the burning ones, which is what their

name means in Hebrew.

And so they are pictured here as you have many things in Revelation pictured. Rather than saying, well, here were these seven angels, it says they were lamps of fire or torches of fire. This is one of the clues that tells us that they are in fact cherubim.

They are flaming ones or burning ones. Or seraphim. You look again in chapter five and verse six of Revelation.

I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures and in the midst of the elders stood a lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. Now here is a new piece of information. These seven spirits of God not only perform their ceremonial duties in the throne room of God, but they are also sent forth into all the earth and they are pictured as being the eyes of the lamb.

They go forth and observe and report back. This is one of the fascinating things, by the way, about the role of angels in God's economy and in God's oversight over the human race and human history. There are a multitude of passages, and we will note a few of them tonight, such as Job 1 and 2, where it is indicated that angels go forth and observe and come back and report to God.

We have it in the New Testament. You remember Jesus speaking about the little children, suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not. If a man causes one of these little ones to stumble, it would be better for him for a millstone to be around his neck and be cast into the sea.

Why? Because their angels are constantly before my Father in heaven. And you get the idea from what Jesus says that there are angels watching over the little ones, and these are the little ones of the faith. These are believers, not every little child that is born, but these little ones from the context, it's clear, are believers.

And there is a valid concept of guardian angels. There are angels who watch over believers, these little ones that belong to the Father, and report to the Father. They go and stand before God and report.

You think, well now, why does an omniscient God need observers? Why does the Lamb, who is equally omniscient, need eyes, these seven spirits who go forth into all the earth, to observe and report back? Well, it has some fascinating implications for our doctrine of omniscience and so forth. Is there a means by which God sees all and knows all and is aware of every sparrow that falls? Is this an intrinsic ability that he has in his own mind, or has he organized angels? Maybe he's got sparrow-watching angels and hair-numbering angels. That is at least a possibility to be explored.

We know for sure that the Scripture spends a lot of time telling us that angels observe

and report to God. We're going to see that in Genesis when we return from our break and note the role that God employs angels to fulfill in the observation of mankind. All of these things are important to us in at least three different areas.

One, to understand and be informed about angels. Secondly, to understand and be informed about the roles of God the Holy Spirit. And thirdly, to distinguish our understanding of the ministry of God the Holy Spirit in our lives because some of the things that angels do have been ascribed to the Holy Spirit and we in turn think that this is valid to understand from Scripture.

So believe it or not, even as we study the wind and the spirits and the angels, we're going to see that it makes a difference in how we operate from day to day and how we understand God's provision for us and God's spiritual ministry to us through God the Holy Spirit and through angels. So when we come back, we will further our attempts to sort those out.